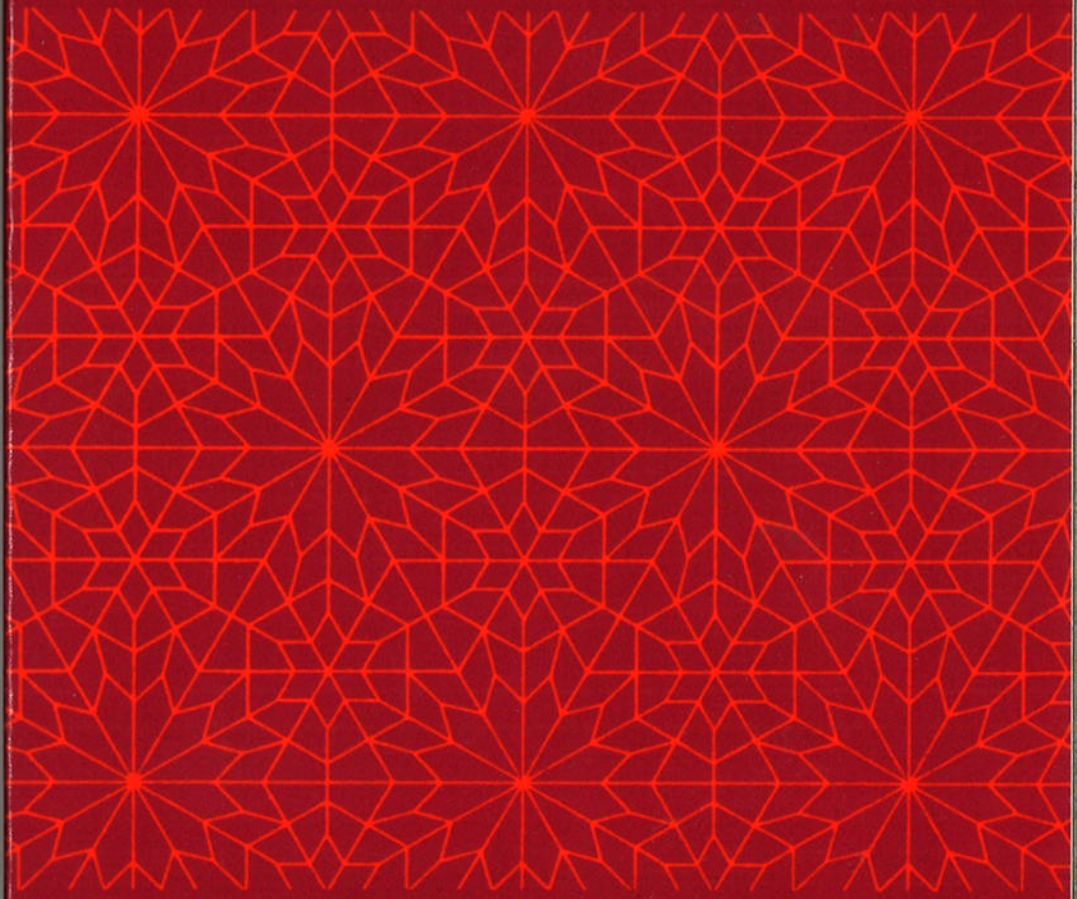
DEATH BEFORE DYING

THE SUFI POEMS OF SULTAN BAHU



Translated and Introduced by JAMAL J. ELIAS

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for Danielle,

those who do not lose their treasures do not find a friend

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Danielle C. Elias and Shahzad Bashir for not only encouraging this project but also for carefully and critically reading my translations; to my father for introducing me to Sultan Bahu; to my mother for making Punjabi sound lyrical; and to Begum Abida Parveen and Ustad Pathana Khan, neither of whom I have had the pleasure of meeting, for making Bahu's *Abyāt* come alive through song.

INTRODUCTION

POETRY ENJOYS PRIDE OF PLACE among literary and artistic forms throughout the Islamic world. While this is no doubt due in part to its aesthetics, the mnemonic quality of poetry makes it easy to remember for people who cannot read and write—a significant proportion of the world's Muslim population today as in the past. It is simultaneously valued for the same characteristics by literate people, for, as something that you can carry in your memory, it is a cheap and portable form of art.

One of the most satisfying marriages in world literature is the one between Islamic mystical (Sufi) experiences and teachings and poetry, which is capable of conveying these ideas in a manner that is as seductive as it is instructive. The mystical poetry written in Persian by famous figures such as Rumi (d. 1273), Saʿdi (d. 1292), and Hafiz (d. 1389) is very well known both in the Persian original and in its celebrated and widely circulated translations. But mystical poetry is composed and enjoyed to no less a degree in other languages spoken by Muslims all over the world. There is a rich tradition of Sufi literary composition in Arabic which is often used as a source of inspiration by the best known Persian poets. Similarly, Ottoman Turkish and Urdu poetry derive much of their literary style from Persian and much of their content from both Arabic and Persian alongside their native Turkish and Indian cultures.

Persian Sufi poetry and its derivative genres in Urdu and Ottoman Turkish are representatives of a highly literate court culture, and have traditionally enjoyed a limited audience outside these circles. Paralleling this "high culture" form of poetry there was a popular Sufi poetical literature in both Punjabi and other languages spoken by Indian Muslims (not to mention Arabic, vernacular Turkish, Kurdish, and many others). This form of poetry was often viewed as too rustic to enjoy court patronage, and received none of the encouragement or rewards enjoyed by "high culture" poetry. It is therefore a testament to the innate talents of these popular Sufi poets and to the magnetic attraction of their poetry that for every Ottoman court poet like Sheyh Galip there is a Yunus Emre, and for every Mughal court figure like Mirza Ghalib there is a Sultan Bahu.

In fact, it is these popular poets, writing in the vernaculars of their own people, who are more renowned. The average citizen of a small town in Anatolia may not even be familiar with Sheyh Galip's name, but more than likely would know some of Yunus Emre's poetry by heart. Similarly, an ordinary citizen of the Punjab is unlikely to be familiar with Mirza Ghalib's work, but could be moved to tears by listening to someone like Sultan Bahu.

BAHU'S RELIGIOUS MESSAGE

Sultan Bahu's mystical poetry is an expression of disillusionment with formal, legalistic, and institutionalized forms of religion, and of optimistic faith in the possibility of a personal, individual spiritual relationship with God. Bahu is emphasizing a central tenet of Sufism: that an absolute love for and devotion to God can result in the experience of losing oneself within the divine. The major impediment to this union is human attachment to the physical world, an instinct ingrained in the human soul. Through systematic detachment from this world and the practice of asceticism under the guidance of a Sufi master—together with meditational exercises based on the repetition of God's name—the Sufi successfully tames the soul. The soul's passions, once harnessed, help transport the Sufi further along his or her journey. The imagery used is often that of taming a horse, which then becomes the mount on which the mystic travels for the rest of the mystical path. The ultimate goal of this journey is to lose one's identity within the greater identity of God, or to attain spiritual death before physical death. This quest for death before dying is based on a saying attributed to the Prophet: "Die before you die!"

Sultan Bahu develops these central concepts in a manner which would be appealing and accessible to a wide audience unfamiliar with the more esoteric and philosophical dimensions of Sufism. He emphasizes the power of love and stresses that love is more important than learning. In order to show the danger of turning religious practice into a habit or a birthright, he juxtaposes the learned scholar, who is incapable of attaining God, against the illiterate person whose love-madness transports him or her to the divine.

> The Lord was neither found on the exalted throne, nor is the Lord in the Ka'ba.
> The Lord was not found in learning and books, nor is the Lord in the prayer niche.
> He was never found swimming in the Ganges, nor met through countless pilgrimages.[1]

In line with many other Sufi figures from the formative period of Sufism in the ninth century onward, Bahu uses an emphasis on the value of illiteracy not to undermine the importance of Islam as a religion but to underline it. According to Bahu, while religious scholars only observe the formal, outward aspects of Islamic ritual and doctrine, the illiterate lover understands their true meaning. In

the heart of the lover, the Islamic creedal statement "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" takes on a magical significance. Bahu states that the only writing one needs to know are the letters *mīm* and *alif*. The *mīm* is the first letter of the name "Muhammad." The *alif* is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet and also the first letter of the name "Allah." It is written as a vertical line, bringing to mind a raised index finger and symbolizing the unity of God. Thus when Bahu speaks of knowing only the *alif,* he is positioning himself squarely in a Sufi tradition which uses this metaphor to emphasize the futility of becoming preoccupied with external forms while ignoring underlying meanings.

> Those who find the Beloved in the letter *alif* need not open the Qur'an to read it.[2]

Many of Sultan Bahu's metaphors are common to Sufi poetry in many languages. The divine beloved is haughty and distant, and the quest for this beloved is a source of great anguish to the Sufi lover. The lover is likened to a nightingale in love with the rose which sits unattainable in its bed of thorns, causing the nightingale to spend its life in lamentation and to risk capture in the rose garden of grief:

> I pecked and ate many grains of wheat, now the string of eternity is around my neck.
> I flutter, caught in the noose, like the nightingale in the garden.[3]

Such metaphors and his references to famous Sufi figures of the past also place him squarely in a wider Sufi poetical tradition, as does his use of the term *faqir* (meaning beggar) to refer to a mystic, thus signifying the belief that material poverty is related to spiritual wealth.

Sufi symbolism is apparent in Bahu's very name, which means "with Him" (i.e., God). Bahu used his given name to greater advantage than most other poets. Most of his poems end in the refrain "hu" ("He" or "Him"), a formula which simultaneously renders them instantly recognizable as Sultan Bahu's compositions and marks them as specifically Sufi poetry because "hu" is a common formula in the Sufi meditational exercise of *zikr.* This refrain became so characteristic of his style that later generations added it to all his poems. In a similar fashion, his name "Bahu" appears in the final line of all his poems, even though in many instances it ruins the meter of the verse and was, undoubtedly, not included by the poet himself. On other occasions, not only is the name Bahu an integral part of the final verse, as is common in Islamic poetic traditions, but its meaning is also incorporated into the poem:

> You will find the singular Beloved if you gamble your head.
> Be drunk in the love of Allah, always saying "Hu! Hu!"
> While contemplating the name of Allah, control your breath.
> When essence blends with Essence, only then will you be called "Bahu."[4]

Many of the themes discussed by Bahu and the metaphors he uses are drawn from the literary bank of Sufi writing and are then adapted to the Punjabi environment. A striking example of this is his frequent reference to birds. In addition to the stock metaphor of the nightingale referred to above, Bahu made particular use of hawks and falcons. They are often used as symbols of the soul in its quest to return to God, just as a falcon desires to return to its master's hand:

> How can the poor falcon fly, for its feet have been bound.
> Whoever does not possess love, Bahu, loses both worlds.[5]

In some of his poems Bahu refers to birds in a context which is comprehensible only if one is familiar with the Indian environment. This is true, for example, in his reference to the owl as symbolizing

stupidity[6] and in his images of birds singing as if to welcome the monsoon:

> I wander lamenting like the cuckoo, begging that my days not go by in waste.
> Speak, bird! The monsoon has come; perhaps God will shed some rain.[7]

The cuckoo is traditionally believed to be singing a lament that means "Where is my beloved?" In the second line, I have substituted the generic "bird" for a species known as *papeeha* in Punjabi, the call of which is this same lament.

Bahu's extreme reverence for his spiritual master is also a theme common in Sufism, particularly in the Indian context. Sufi writers traditionally emphasize the centrality of a living spiritual guide, stating that it is almost impossible to attain advanced mystical states without the help of such a master. The Sufi practitioner is supposed to surrender both his body and soul to this person, proverbially becoming like a corpse in the hands of a mortician. This attitude toward Sufi masters has led to a very high degree of veneration, so much so that the tombs of dead Sufis function as the centers of saint and shrine cults which are visited by all sorts of devotees, most of whom have no formal Sufi affiliation. They also function as the centers for major religious celebrations, and many people come to these shrines to seek the intercession of Sufi saints—both living and dead—for critical events in their lives. Many legalistic scholars find this veneration suspect and speak out against the Sufi shrines. In premodern times such critics had limited success in curtailing the popular devotion to Sufi shrines, which occupy a more central position in the spiritual landscape of the Punjab and other parts of South Asia than do the mosques. Bahu echoes this sentiment in his many verses

which assert that devotion to a Sufi guide is a substitute for the literal observance of all Islamic rituals:

> This body is a dwelling of the true Lord, and my heart like a garden in bloom.
> Within it are fountains, within it are prayer grounds, within it places to bow down in prayer.
> Within it is the Ka'ba, within it the *qibla,* within it cries of "Only Allah!"
> I found the Perfect Guide, Bahu, He alone will take care of me.[8]

One of the most intriguing features of Bahu's poetry, also characteristic of popular Sufi poetry in India, is his occasional use of the feminine gender when talking about himself. Sufi love poetry outside India (and even in the Indian high culture traditions of Persian and Urdu) represents the relationship between lover and beloved as one in which an active human lover pursues a passive (or passive-aggressive) beloved. This dynamic traditionally genders the active partner as male. There is some ambiguity concerning the gender of the passive partner, in part because homoerotic love is widely accepted in Islamic literature and in part because of the lack of formal gender in both Persian and Ottoman. Most of Sultan Bahu's poems fit this pattern, but in a few of them the lover is explicitly female, something which is very clear since Punjabi does have gender:

> I am ugly and my Beloved beautiful—how can I be agreeable to Him?
> He never enters my home though I use a hundred thousand ruses.
> Neither am I beautiful nor have I wealth to display—how can I please my Friend?
> This pain shall remain forever, Bahu, I will die crying.[9]

There is little Islamic precedent for this form of eroticization of the relationship between the human being and God. On the other

hand, it seems to share many elements with Hindu literature, in particular with the *virāhinī* tradition of northern India in which the poet addresses God in the voice of a girl or young woman.[10] Similar to the devotional love poets of the *bhakti* tradition of Krishnaite Hinduism, the Sufi poet can be seen in the role of the herdswoman or Gopi who is in love with God. The death anniversary of an Indian Sufi saint is traditionally called an *'urs,* an Arabic word for "wedding," and many of the rituals undertaken at such festivals clearly celebrate the saint's death as the occasion of his marriage to God. Such feminization of the Sufi is taken to an extreme in some popular Sufi groups where the men dress up in women's clothing. Bahu evokes this image in one of his poems where he uses the term *sadā suhāgan* to indicate a level of blessed happiness; the term literally means a woman whose husband never dies and who therefore never becomes a widow.[11]

Some of the images evoked by Sultan Bahu are peculiar to his Indian environment. Islam and Hinduism were viewed by many legalistic religious scholars as mutually irreconcilable religious systems. This attitude sometimes combined with the administrative policies of Muslim rulers to create conditions of mutual hostility between Muslims and Hindus. It was largely through the efforts of mystical figures such as Sultan Bahu that Islam gained popularity and converts in India. These mystical thinkers not only absorbed Indian ideas and values, they also consciously attempted to address an audience wider than the Turco-Persian settlers and the small number of Persianized Indian converts. Sultan Bahu's Punjabi poetry is clear evidence of this. The majority of his works are in Persian, but his fame derives from Punjabi verses that emphasize the sincerity of religious devotion irrespective of religious affiliation. It is no wonder that he is revered by Sikh and Hindu Punjabis as well as by Muslims.

The Punjabi language has languished in comparison to the change in status of other northern Indian languages in the last two hundred years. Before the British colonization of India, its Muslim rulers had used Persian as their official language and ignored local vernaculars. Following the breakup of the Mughal Empire, the Sikh rulers of the Punjab continued to favor Persian as the language of state despite the fact that Punjabi is the Sikh scriptural language. By the time the British finally conquered the Punjab in 1839–41, the British administrative policy of using major ethnic languages to communicate with the colonized population was well in place, and the choice of Urdu (a language from north-central India) as the administrative language of Indian Muslims was an accomplished fact.

It is therefore no surprise that when British colonial rule was extended to the Punjab, Urdu was used as the medium of official commerce with the Punjabi Muslims (the use of Persian, the Islamic imperial language, was simply never an option for the British). As a movement for Muslim self-determination took shape in northern India, the majority of Muslim activists, including those from the Punjab, willingly accepted Urdu as the language representing Muslim ethnicity. This pattern, in which Punjabi was marginalized and trivialized to the benefit of Urdu, continued after the establishment of Pakistan in 1947.[12] The trivialization of Punjabi has meant that the government, which is the main sponsor of educational and cultural projects, has put virtually no effort into the standardization of Punjabi as a language or the preservation and dissemination of its literature. There is no standardized Punjabi grammar or script, and no good Punjabi dictionary. As a result systematic, critical studies of Punjabi literary works are all but impossible to do.

Greater Punjab is a vast geographical region, including the dusty flat lands surrounding Delhi, the rolling hills of Jammu and Himachal Pradesh, the narrow valleys of Hazara and Azad Kashmir, the salt hills and scrub of the Potohar plateau, and the rocky desert of the Deras in Baluchistan, Sindh, and Sarhad (the anachronistic North West Frontier Province of Pakistan). But the Punjabi heartland is the northwestern corner of the Indo-Gangetic plain, a flat region dominated by its rivers and from which the Punjab (Five Rivers) takes its name. Most of Islamic Punjabi literature comes from the center of this region, a place known as the Rechna Doab (Ravi and Chenab Twin River Region).

The rivers dictate the rhythms of the romanticized Punjabi life. The major daily occupations of this life are farming and the care of cows and water buffaloes. People live in villages surrounded by fields, rather than in homesteads located on private land. As a result, the daily march out to the fields or to pastures has become a motif in Punjabi literature. The rivers and the agriculture dependent upon them become the context in which the dramatic moments of Punjabi life are played out. Bathing, washing clothes and fetching water, grazing animals, fetching fodder, meeting mystics and mendicants, taking food to farmers and herdsmen—all become scenes of romance and intrigue. The Punjab is a place where poets can evoke images of birds pecking out the newly sprouted shoots of wheat, where buffaloes refuse to yield their milk until they hear the flute of their herdsman, and where (as mentioned earlier) a variety of lark is named after its plaintive cry, "Where is my beloved?"

This is a place where the rivers flood their banks with every monsoon, and where they mysteriously change course as they make their serpentine way from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea. As the rivers make new channels, they create rich alluvial islands, called "*belas*." The *bela* is an important part of life as recorded in Punjabi

literature. A good *bela* is covered with grass, a bad *bela* with marshes and quicksand; a good *bela* is a place to graze animals and meet lovers, a bad *bela* is where tigers hunt and where one dies of snakebite or drowning. It is on a *bela* that Hir meets her beloved Ranjha in the famous Punjabi epic, and it is on the *bela* that she is betrayed. Thus when Sultan Bahu uses the imagery of the *bela,* he is not only evoking all that the *bela* represents in Punjabi rural life, he is also drawing on his audience's familiarity with the image of the *bela* in Punjabi literature, particularly in the epic of Hir.[13]

It is in the wedding of Islamic mystical metaphors with the imagery of the Punjabi heartland that Sultan Bahu most distinguishes himself, and it is in this very aspect that I feel my translations are weakest. Assuming that the majority of readers of this work will be unfamiliar not only with Punjabi but also with the Punjab, I have leaned toward more generic metaphors in my translation. Thus "*bela*" is translated as "marsh," "dune," and "river bank." I have also changed the names of birds and plants when the original is unknown in most of the English-speaking world. In other places, I have taken advantage of linguistic ambiguity, such as in translating the word *daryā* as either "sea" or "river" depending on the context.

I have attempted to translate Bahu's work as literally as possible while retaining some semblance of English style and grammar. One characteristic of the genre of Punjabi *abyāt* is that the content of each line of a poem does not necessarily have anything to do with the next. Furthermore, Bahu's *Abyāt* are often in a very colloquial tone, and frequently reverse the normal Punjabi word order. These characteristics combine to give the translation an occasionally choppy and awkward tone. Keeping in mind the fact that these poems are normally sung, and are not expected to conform strictly to Indo-Persian metrics, I have rearranged the sentence structure only in a few extreme cases. The Punjabi *Abyāt* of Sultan Bahu are nor-

mally arranged in alphabetical order by the first letter of the Arabo-Persian alphabet. Since this arrangement is irrelevant in an English translation and has absolutely no relationship to the content, I have arranged the translations according to my own aesthetic sense.

SULTAN BAHU'S LIFE

Very little is known about Sultan Bahu's life, and such information as exists is shaped by a three-hundred-year-long exercise in hagiography. He is mentioned in passing in biographical dictionaries of Indian Sufi figures, but these entries are extremely brief. The only substantial account of his life is in the *Manāqib-i Sultānī,* a work written six or seven generations after Sultan Bahu's death by one of his descendants by the name of Sultan Hamid. According to this text, which is extremely hagiographical in its tone, Sultan Bahu was born during the reign of the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58) in the town of Shorkot, located between Multan and Jhang in Pakistan. Shorkot had been given as a source of revenue to his father, Bayazid Muhammad, in recognition for military service to the Mughal government. His mother, Rasti, gave him the overtly mystical name of Bahu, meaning "With Him [God]." Bahu kept this as his pen name, to which his disciples added the honorific title of "Sultan" which has been retained by both his spiritual and biological descendants. Prose works by Sultan Bahu suggest that he referred to himself as Bahu Aʿwan. The Aʿwans are a tribe, based in the extreme western end of the Punjab, claiming descent from ʿAli (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet) through his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya. ʿAli is considered the fourth caliph by Sunni and the first imam by Shiʿa Muslims. As a result, not only do the Aʿwans command high status in the Indian Muslim environment for being Arabs but they also claim descent from the household of the Prophet, albeit not through his daughter Fatima.

Nothing is known of Sultan Bahu's early childhood or education. It has traditionally been held that he received little or no formal schooling, and evidence in support of this view is drawn from some of his verses. Such verses are a formulaic part of the image of the love-infused Sufi; they deemphasize formal education in order to underline the transformative power of the love of God. Stories abound of early Sufis who could read nothing except the name of God but who worked miracles through it. Bahu's extensive writings would, in fact, suggest that he must have had at least some formal schooling. His lengthy and esoteric Persian writings show that he was familiar with the standardized Sufi teachings of the day. Furthermore, Bahu's prose works contain many traditions of the Prophet which are quoted in Arabic, a language and literature which could only be learned in the Punjab through formal education.

The *Manāqib-i Sultānī* states that Sultan Bahu tried his hand at agriculture in his youth but gave it up and began to wander the forests and graveyards near Jhang. On one such occasion he encountered a Sufi on the banks of the Ravi. This man, named Habibullah Khan, became Bahu's first spiritual guide but quickly realized Bahu's unusual mystical potential and sent him to Delhi to study with his own master, Sayyid ʿAbdur-Rahman of the Qadiri Sufi order. It is most likely that Bahu's formal knowledge of Sufism derives from the unspecified amount of time he spent in Delhi with this second Sufi master.

During his time in Delhi, Bahu met the future Mughal ruler Aurangzeb at least once at the communal Friday prayer. Some biographers have made much of his contact with Aurangzeb, the last of the truly powerful Mughals, but these contacts are no doubt exaggerated. Bahu does not appear to have wielded any influence over Aurangzeb's religious policies, nor did he benefit financially or politically from association with the future emperor. If anything, their re-

lationship was most likely shaped by the fact that Bahu's Sufi master, Sayyid ʿAbdur-Rahman, was related by marriage to Aurangzeb's estranged brother, Dara Shikuh. It is therefore unlikely that Sayyid ʿAbdur-Rahman or any of his disciples would have had much to do with Aurangzeb.

Neither the date nor the reason for Bahu's return to Shorkot are known. The *Manāqib-i Sultānī* states that he married four times, had eight sons (daughters are not mentioned), and never again left the section of the Punjab from which he came. He died in 1691 and was buried outside Shorkot at a place called Qilaqahrgan (or Qilaqaʿr-gan). In 1775 the Chenab river changed course and threatened to wash away his grave, whereupon his coffin was dug up and moved to its present location where his shrine functions as a pilgrimage site for people from all over the Punjab.

SULTAN BAHU'S WRITTEN WORKS

Sultan Bahu's fame is almost entirely due to his Punjabi poetry, called the *Abyāt*. This is despite the fact that he was a prolific writer of Persian prose and poetry.[14] The author of the *Manāqib-i Sultānī* claims that Bahu wrote one hundred forty works, and twenty-six existing works are ascribed to him.[15] Most of these have been published as nonscholarly Urdu translations. Through a strange set of circumstances, the work of critical edition and study of the Persian texts is being thwarted by the heirs of one Malik Fazl Din who, in the first quarter of this century, came to the realization that his vocation in life was to disseminate the teachings of Sultan Bahu. Malik Fazl Din convinced the owners of what are believed to be the most accurate (and in some cases, the only known) manuscripts of Sultan Bahu's works to hand them over to him. He then commissioned a number of unskilled translators to render them into Urdu, which he published in a press he had opened in Lahore under the name

Allāh wālē kī qawmī dukkān (The Godly One's Public Shop). The original manuscripts are in the hands of Malik Fazl Din's family which allows no one, not even the spiritual heirs of Sultan Bahu, to see them.

This is very unfortunate, because the available translations suggest that Sultan Bahu's prose works are deserving of study. They are comprised of a number of book-length monographs and a majority of shorter treatises, containing general Sufi teachings, statements demonstrating the excellence of the Qadiri order, and didactic writings illustrating visions, stations, and states encountered along the Sufi path. A preliminary investigation suggests that the most important of these are *Mahik al-faqr kalān* and *Nūr al-huda-yi kalān*.

THE PUNJABI *ABYĀT*

Bahu excelled as a mystical poet. There are frequent and extensive fragments of Persian poetry in his prose works, and he also has a Persian collection of poetry which has been published together with a versified Urdu translation.[16] But his Persian verse has not gained a popularity in any way comparable to his Punjabi poetry, which is regarded as one of the literary treasures of the language. At least fourteen editions of Bahu's Punjabi *Abyāt* have been printed, in both the Perso-Arabic and the Gurmukhi scripts (the latter being the script used by Sikhs). It has also been translated into Urdu and English, although all the translations have serious shortcomings.

Many problems of translation and redaction derive from the fact that there are no manuscripts of Bahu's Punjabi poetry known to predate this century. In fact, the oldest available collection of his *Abyāt* is a lithograph edition printed in 1891 and containing 116 poems. The most influential edition was published in 1915 by the aforementioned Malik Fazl Din and contains 183 poems. However, nothing is known concerning the written source of either of these

versions.[17] Malik Fazl Din's 1915 edition has become the basis for most later editions and translations. Several attempts have been made to establish a reliable version of Bahu's Punjabi poetry, the most notable being by Sultan Altaf Ali (who has consulted the greatest number of sources) and Sayyid Nazir Ahmed (who has made an attempt at reconstructing the poems using a literary historical methodology).[18] I have relied on these two editions in preparing my translations of Bahu's work.

Although they are better than all other editions of Bahu's *Abyāt,* both Sultan Altaf Ali's and Sayyid Nazir Ahmed's versions suffer from shortcomings, in large part due to difficulties endemic to the study of Muslim (as opposed to Sikh) Punjabi literature at this point in time. Punjabi has traditionally been seen as an oral language and treated as unworthy of being written down. As a result, the earliest known written examples of Bahu's *Abyāt* date from two centuries after his death; there is, therefore, a certain futility to a text critical method of establishing an accurate version of his Punjabi poetry. It is conceivable that valuable manuscripts of the *Abyāt* are waiting to be discovered in unattended private libraries, but the current written records of the *Abyāt* have no textual connection with Sultan Bahu or his immediate disciples.

Given the complete absence of a manuscript tradition, it would be methodologically more productive to take an oral, folkloric rather than a philological approach to studying not only the *Abyāt* of Bahu but also the entire canon of premodern Punjabi poetry. Bahu's poetry exists, is transmitted, and is appreciated almost entirely as an oral form accompanied by music. Anonymous poets have composed verses that have been attributed to Bahu, and his own verses have been modified in terms of vocabulary, meter, and style to suit the dialects and tastes of the audience. Attempts to recover Bahu's own poems require the establishment not only of a Punjabi grammar, but

also a historical grammar of the Doabi Punjabi dialect of two centuries ago. Sayyid Nazir Ahmed's attempt at making the *Abyāt* fit the standards of Urdu and Persian metrics is flawed in precisely this respect. In contrast, Sultan Altaf Ali's methodology of allowing the most popular versions to represent the text seems better, and I have followed him in this regard except when obvious Urdu words have crept into his edition. The literature is oral, and the most widely circulated variants should be considered the most representative.

There are two existing English translations of Sultan Bahu's *Abyāt*. The first and better known one is by Maqbool Elahi.[19] This edition includes the Punjabi text as an appendix, and has useful notes. The second is a partial translation preceded by an uncritical study of Sultan Bahu's life and thought by L. R. Krishna and A. R. Luther.[20] Both translations are somewhat dated in their idiom, and sacrifice accuracy of meaning in favor of rhyme and meter (this is explicitly stated as a goal by Maqbool Elahi). Furthermore, the number of verses in the poems in these translations does not correspond to those in the original *Abyāt,* and the chosen rhyme has no similarity to that of Bahu's work. Both editions are out of print.

NOTES

1. Cf. page 114.
2. Cf. page 56.
3. Cf. page 24.
4. Cf. page 134.
5. Cf. page 89.
6. Cf. page 122.
7. Cf. page 77.
8. Cf. page 42.
9. Cf. page 111.
10. For a discussion of the relationship between this tradition and the Sufi poetry of Sindh, see Ali S. Asani and Kamal Abdel-Malek, *Celebrating Muham-*

mad: Images of the Prophet in Popular Muslim Poetry (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 26ff.

11. Cf. page 75. There is a parallel between this phenomenon and the concept of the church—and therefore its individual members—as the bride of Christ, an idea which is seen frequently in Christian mystical poetry. However, given the fact that the primary cultural contacts between the Christian and Islamic civilizations during this period were through the Mediterranean world and the Middle East, and that this metaphor is not prevalent in the Islamic literature of that area, it is unlikely that the mystic as a bride of God was taken by Indian Sufis from Christianity.

12. There is a substantial body of literature on the language policies of the British in India and of post-partition Pakistan. For information on the history of Punjabi during this period, see C. Shackle, "Language and Cultural Identity in Pakistan Punjab," in Gopal Krishna, ed., *Contributions to South Asian Studies,* vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), 137–60, and "Some Observations on the Evolution of Modern Standard Punjabi," in Joseph T. O'Connell et al., eds., *Sikh History and Religion in the Twentieth Century,* South Asian Studies Papers, no. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for South Asian Studies, 1990), 101–9.

13. The most famous rendition of this story is by the Punjabi poet Waris Shah. It has several English translations; see, for example, Charles F. Usborne, *The Adventures of Hir Ranjha* (London: P. Owen, 1973), and Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud, *Folk Romances of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa and Sang-e Meel Publications, 1995). The best study of this epic is in Denis Matringe, *Hir Varis Shah: poème panjabi du XVIIIe siècle* (Pondicherry: Institut français, 1988).

14. For an introductory discussion of his Persian works, see Sajidullah Tafhimi, "Shaykh Sultan Bahu: His Life and Persian Works," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 28:2 (1980), 133–50.

15. Annotated descriptions of these works can be found in Sayyid Ahmad Sa'id Hamadani, *Ahwāl-u maqāmāt-i Hazrat Sultān Bāhū,* edited by Hafiz M. Afzal Faqir (Islamabad: Islamic Book Foundation, 1991).

16. Mas'ud Qurayshi, trans., *Naqsh-i Bāhū: Hazrat Sultān Bāhū kā fārsī kalām aur urdū tarjama* (Islamabad: Lok Virsa, n.d.).

17. A detailed discussion of the various editions of the *Abyāt* is contained in Sayyid Nazir Ahmed, ed., *Kalām-i Sultān Bāhū* (Lahore: Packages Ltd., 1981).

18. Sultan Altaf Ali, ed. and trans., *Abyāt-i Bāhū* (Lahore: Al-Faruq Book Foundation, n.d.).

19. *The "Abyāt" of Sultān Bāhoo* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1967).

20. *Sultan Bahu: Sufi Poet of the Punjab* (Lahore: Sh. Mubarak Ali, 1982).

SULTAN BAHU'S MYSTICAL POEMS

جتھے رتی عشق وکاوے اوتھے منّاں ایمان دویوے ہو
کتب کتاباں ورد وظیفے اوتر چا کچیوے ہو
باجھوں مرشد کجھ ناں حاصل توڑے راتیں جاگ پڑھیوے ہو
مریئے مرن تھیں اگے باہو تاں رب حاصل تھیوے ہو

Where one gram of love is sold, there one should give tons of faith.
Books, prayers, and liturgies should be heaped on top.
Nothing is gained without a guide, even if one stays up nights
in study.
Let us die before dying, Bahu, only then is the Lord attained.

دنیا ڈھونڈن والے کُتّے در در پھرن حیرانی ہو
ہڈی اُتّے ہوڑ تنہاں دی لڑدیاں عمر وہانی ہو
عقل دے کوتاہ سمجھ ناں جانن پیون لوڑن پانی ہو
باجھوں ذکر ربّے دے باہو کوڑی رام کہانی ہو

Seekers of this world are like dogs, wandering from door to door in wonder.
Their attention is riveted on a bone, their lives wasted in bickering.
Short on intelligence and unable to understand, they set out in search of water.
Apart from recollection of the Lord, Bahu, all else is idle chatter.

جو دل منگے ہووے ناہیں ہوون رہیا پریرے ہو
دوست ناں دیوے دل دا دارو عشق ناں واگاں پھیرے ہو
اس میدان محبّت دے وچ ملن تا تکھیرے ہو
میں قربان تنہاں توں باہو جنہاں رکھیا قدم اگیرے ہو

The heart's desire is unfulfilled and distant.
My Lover won't give it medicine, and it won't mend its ways.
Hotter fires burn in love's battlefield
And, Bahu, I'm in awe of those who charge in.

گُجھے سائے رب صاحب والے کُجھ نہیں خبر اصل دی ہو
گندم دانہ بُہتا چگیا ہن گل پئی ڈور ازل دی ہو
پھاہی دے وچ میں پئی ترّفاں بلبل باغ مثل دی ہو
غیر دلے تھیں سٹ کے باہو رکھیئے امید فضل دی ہو

The hidden shadows of the Lord Master, nothing is known of their source.

I pecked and ate many grains of wheat, now the string of eternity is around my neck.

I flutter, caught in the noose, like the nightingale in the garden.

Tossing all else from the heart, Bahu, keep hoping for grace.

nightingale: a very common metaphor for the Sufi lover in the courtly tradition of Persian mystical poetry. The nightingale sings to express its love for the rose, which sits unattainable in a circle of thorns. In this poem, Bahu carries the metaphor one step further by implying that the nightingale's love draws it uncontrollably to the rose garden where it becomes trapped in a snare. This concept of being drawn to one's own destruction through love for the beloved is common in Sufi poetry; it is frequently evoked through the image of a moth being drawn toward a candle, only to be consumed by the flame.

ایہ تن میرا چشماں ہووے تے میں مرشد ویکھ ناں رجّاں ہو
لوں لوں دے مڈھ لکھ لکھ چشماں ہک کھولاں ہک کجّاں ہو
اتنیاں ڈٹھّیاں صبر ناں آوے ہور کتے ول بھجّاں ہو
مرشد دا دیدار ہے باہو مینوں لکھ کروڑاں حجّاں ہو

Were my body to become one large eye, I would not see enough of my guide.

In every cell a million eyes, I'd close one and open another.

Even seeing this much wouldn't calm me, what else can I do?

Bahu, one vision of my guide is as a million billion pilgrimages.

pilgrimage: a reference to the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims are ritually obligated to undertake once in their lifetime if they have the means. The Hajj must be undertaken on the 7th through the 10th days of the last month of the Islamic lunar calendar (this month is called Zu'l-hijja [month of the Hajj] in recognition of the paramount importance of the ritual). A major portion of the pilgrimage consists in circumambulating (*tawāf*) the Ka'ba, a building believed to have been built by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) at God's command. All the ritual activities undertaken during the Hajj imitate the actions of the Prophet Muhammad and are believed to commemorate events in the life of Ibrahim and his family. As such, the Hajj is not only a major ritual that enforces God's covenantal relationship with Muslims, but by bringing Muslims together from all parts of the world, it also is a crucial display of Islamic social solidarity. Thus any statement that seems to trivialize the Hajj has enormous impact on a Muslim audience. The classical Sufi figure al-Hallaj (d. 922) is famous for having built a model of the Ka'ba in his house. This action, intended to demonstrate the hollow nature of blindly engaging in rituals without understanding their underlying meaning, scandalized the orthodox establishment of his day. Bahu and (educated) members of his audience were, no doubt, familiar with al-Hallaj's action.

پاك پلیت ناں ہوندے ہرگز توڑے رہنْدے وچ پلیتی ہو
وحدت دے دریا اچھلے ہك دل صحی ناں کیتی ہو
ہك بت خانیں واصل ہوئے ہك پڑھ پڑھ رہن مسیتی ہو
فاضل ست فضیلت بیٹھے باہو عشق نماز جاں نیتی ہو

The pure will never be impure, even if they live in filth.
The seas of unity are crashing near, but one heart hasn't learned its lesson.
Some attain the goal in idol temples, while others stay glued to their books in mosques.
Many a scholar tossed scholarship aside, Bahu, when he vowed the prayer of love.

بغداد شہر دی کیا نشانی اُچیاں لمیاں چیراں ہو
تن من میرا پرزے پرزے جیوں درزی دیاں لیراں ہو
اینْہاں لیراں دی گل کفنی پا کے رلساں سنگ فقیراں ہو
بغداد شہر دے ٹکڑے منگساں باہو کرساں "میراں! میراں!" ہو

I have no souvenirs of Baghdad except wounds, long and deep.
My body and soul have been cut to pieces, like the clippings of a tailor.
I'll wrap a shroud of these clippings around my neck and join a group of beggars.
I'll beg for Baghdad's scraps, Bahu, and cry out "Miran! Miran!"

Baghdad: 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1165), after whom the Qadiri Sufi order (to which Bahu belonged) takes its name, is buried in Baghdad. The Qadiri Sufi order is one of the most widely distributed in the Islamic world, and al-Jilani's tomb serves as an important pilgrimage site. Baghdad also holds a special place in the Islamic imagination, because it was the seat of the Caliphate during its heyday.

beggar: the word is *faqir,* which means both beggar and mystic. Underlying this ambiguity is the common Sufi belief that material poverty is a necessary prerequisite for spiritual wealth.

"Miran!": an epithet of Sultan Bahu's spiritual master.

جیوندے کے جانن سار مویاں دی سو جانے جو مردا ہو
قبراں دے وچ اَن ناں پانی اتھے خرچ لوڑیْندا گھردا ہو
ہك وچھوڑا ماں پیو بھائیاں دوجا عذاب قبر دا ہو
واہ نصیب انہانْدا باہو جہڑا وچ حیاتی مردا ہو

What do the living know of the dead? Only they know who die.
The grave has neither food nor water, one must bring supplies
from home.
Leaving one's mother, father, and brothers, then the torments of
the grave . . .
How fortunate are they, Bahu, who die while still living!

ناں میں عالم ناں میں فاضل ناں مفتی ناں قاضی ہو
ناں دل میرا دوزخ منگے ناں شوق بہشتیں راضی ہو
ناں میں تریہے روزے رکھے ناں میں پاك نمازی ہو
باجھ وصال اللّہ دے باہو دنیا کوڑی بازی ہو

Neither am I a sage, nor am I a scholar, nor a cleric, nor a judge.
Neither does my heart ask for hell, nor is it content with fondness
for paradise.
Neither did I keep the thirty fasts, nor am I a pure, praying person.
Unless you attain Allah, Bahu, this world is but a game.

thirty fasts: a reference to the daily fasts for the entire month of Ramadan.

pure, praying person: praying five times a day and fasting from before sunrise until after sunset during the entire month of Ramadan are two of the five ritual requirements of Islam. The other three are the Hajj (see page 25), giving a percentage of one's wealth in charity, and striving in the path of God.

ایمان سلامت ہر کوئی منگے عشق سلامت کوئی ہو
منگن ایمان شرماون عشقوں دل نوں غیرت ہوئی ہو
جس منزل نوں عشق پچاوے ایمان نوں خبر ناں کوئی ہو
میرا عشق سلامت رکھّیں باہو ایمانوں دیاں دھروئی ہو

Everyone asks for firmness in faith, but few for firmness in love.
They ask for faith and are ashamed of love, such arrogant hearts!
Faith has no idea of the place where love transports you.
I swear by my faith, Bahu, keep my love firm!

کیا ہویا بُت اوڈھر ہویا دل ہرگز دور ناں تھیوے ہو
سے کوہاں میرا مرشد وسدا مینوں وچ حضور دسیوے ہو
جینْدے اندر عشق دی رتی اوہ بِن شرابوں کھیوے ہو
نام فقیر تنہاں دا باہو قبر جنہاں دی جیوے ہو

So what if love's idol is hidden? One's heart will never be far away.
My guide lives many mountains away, but he is visible before me.
Whoever has one grain of love is drunk without wine.
They are the true mystics, Bahu, whose graves are alive.

idol: in Punjabi, *but,* a term frequently used in Indo-Persian poetry to denote the beloved. This word has striking literary connotations because of the Islamic ban on the construction, possession, or worship of idols or icons in any form.

اللّہ صحی کیتوسے جداں چمکیا عشق اگوہاں ہو
راتیں دیہاں دیوے تا تکھیرے نت کرے اگوہاں سوہاں ہو
اندر بھاہیں اندر بالن اندر دے وچ دھوہاں ہو
باہو شوہ تداں لدھیوسے جداں عشق کیتوسے سوہاں ہو

I knew God well when love flashed before me.
It gives me strength by night and day, and shows what lies ahead.
In me are flames, in me is fuel, in me is smoke.
I only found my Beloved, Bahu, when love made me aware.

ایہو نفس اساڈا بیلی جو نال اساڈے سِدھّا ہو
زاہد عالم آن نوائے جِتھّے ٹکڑا ویکھے تھِدھا ہو
جو کوئی اسدی کرے سواری اس نام اللّہ دا لدھا ہو
راہ فقر دا مشکل باہو گھر ماں ناں سیرا ردھّا ہو

Only such a soul as my companion that is with me all the way . . .
One that makes strict scholars bow down when they see a scrap of food.
Whoever rides forth upon this soul has learned the name of God.
The mystic path is hard, Bahu, not mother's home cooking!

mystic path: literally, "path of poverty" (see page 27).

اللّه پڑھیوں پڑھ حافظ ہویوں ناں گیا حجابوں پردا ہو
پڑھ پڑھ عالم فاضل ہویوں بھی طالب ہویوں زر دا ہو
سیئے ہزار کتاباں پڑھیاں پر ظالم نفس ناں مردا ہو
باجھ فقیراں کسے ناں ماریا باہو ایہو چور اندر دا ہو

Repeating "Allah!" you've memorized Him, but the veils have not gone.

You've become a learned scholar through constant study, but still you seek gold.

You've read thousands of books, but your cruel soul will not die.

Bahu, none but the mystics have killed this inner thief.

cruel soul: in Punjabi, *nafs*. In Islamic mystical philosophy and theology the soul is equated with the base, appetitive aspect of a human being, as distinct from the heart (*qalb*) and spirit (*rūh*) which are seen as sources of goodness. The soul is often called *an-nafs al-'ammāra bi's-sū'* (the soul that incites to evil) and is therefore considered an ally of Satan in his attempts to turn the virtuous believer away from the righteous path. Sufi writings often distinguish between three different souls: the soul that incites to evil (often called the lower soul), the censorious soul (*an-nafs al-lawwāma*), and the contented soul (*an-nafs al-mutma'inna*).

اوجھڑ جھل تے مارو بیلا جتھے جالن آئی ہو
جس کدھی نوں ڈھاہ ہمیشاں اوہ ڈھٹھی کل ڈھائی ہو
نیں جنہاںڈی وہے سراندی اوہ سُکھ نہیں سوندے راہی ہو
ریت تے پانی جتھے ہون اکٹھے باہو اوتھے بنی نہیں بجھدی کائی ہو

Wild marshes and shifting sands are where this life finds itself.

A collapsing riverbank must give way tomorrow if not today.

Those toward whom the river is rising never sleep soundly.

Bahu, you cannot build a dam on sand and water.

احـد جـد دتـی وکھـالی از خـود ہویـا فـانـی ہو
قرب وصال مقام ناں منزل ناں اوتھے جسم ناں جانی ہو
ناں اوتھے عشق محبّت کائی ناں اوتھے کون مکانی ہو
عینـوں عیـن تھیـوسے بـاہـو سرّ وحـدت سبحانی ہو

When You made a show of unity, I was lost to myself.

Neither intimacy nor union, stage nor goal, body nor soul remain.

Nor is there love of any kind, nor place, nor being.

In that instant, Bahu, I was faced with the secret of divine unity.

This poem contains a number of technical terms commonly used in Sufi writing that would suggest that a subsection of the audience would be familiar with the philosophical side of Sufism in addition to the message of love and faith which is familiar from Bahu's other poems. Even though the nuances of these terms vary over time (and even from writer to writer), they have shared meanings in Sufi literature: *ahad* (translated as "unity" in the first line) literally means "one." It is a reference to the singularity of God, and immediately brings to mind the first verse of one of the most famous chapters of the Qur'an (Chapter 112). In the same line, *fānī* (translated as "lost") derives from *fanā,* the Sufi concept according to which one of the goals of all mystical exercises is annihilation of the identity of the mystic, whereupon it either dissolves in or is replaced by the greater identity of God. The terms "intimacy" (*qurb*) and "union" (*wisāl*) both refer to stages (*maqām*) on the same quest.

اللّٰہ چمبے دی بوٹی میرے من وچ مرشد لائی ہو
نفی اثبات دا پانی ملیس ہر رگے ہر جائی ہو
اندر بوٹی مشک مچایا جاں پھلاں تے آئی ہو
جیوے مرشد کامل باہو جیں ایہ بوٹی لائی ہو

The guide planted God's jasmine plant within me.

He watered my veins with "negation and affirmation."

Blossoming, the bush spread its fragrance through me.

Long live my perfect guide, Bahu, who has planted this shrub!

jasmine plant: in the poem it is the *champa,* a plant bearing fragrant golden flowers.

"negation and affirmation": a name for the Islamic creedal formula "There is no god but God," which negates the existence of false gods before it affirms the existence of the unique true God. This statement is considered one of the most efficacious formulas for Sufi meditation.

ازل ابد نوں صحی کیتوسے ویکھ تماشے گزرے ہو
چوداں طبق دلینڈے اندر آتش لائے حجرے ہو
جنہاں حق ناں حاصل کیتا اوہ دوہیں جہانیں اجڑے ہو
عاشق غرق ہووے وچ وحدت باہو ویکھ تنہانڈے مجرے ہو

Having learned the lessons of eternity, we saw spectacles of the past.
Fourteen levels has the heart, where fire has struck up a home.
Those who do not attain the Truth are wretched in both realms.
Lovers drown in divine unity, Bahu, see their incredible end!

levels has the heart: the notion of a spiritual body corresponding to the physical human body is common in Sufism. Bahu is referring to a belief that the heart, as the place or "lens" through which this spiritual body is accessed, has levels of being through which the mystic must progress in order to attain the final goal.

ادھی لعنت دنیاں تائیں تے ساری دنیاں داراں ہو
جیں راہ صاحب دے خرچ ناں کیتی لین غضب دیاں ماراں ہو
پئووان کولوں پتّر کوہاوے بھٹھ دنیاں مکاراں ہو
جنہاں ترک دنیاں دی کیتی باہو لیسن باغ بہاراں ہو

Half the curses on the world, and all of them on the worldly.
Whoever does not sow in the path of the Lord will reap the lashes of torment.
Burn, evil world, which causes fathers to sacrifice their sons!
Those who give up this world, Bahu, will gain gardens in bloom.

sacrifice their sons: this probably alludes to the story of Ibrahim and his willingness to sacrifice his son.

اکھیں سرخ مونْہیں تے زردی ہر ولّوں دل آہیں ہو
مہا مہاڑ خوشبوئی والا پہونتا ونج کداہیں ہو
عشق مشك ناں چھپے رہندے ظاہر تھیں اتھاہیں ہو
نام فقیر تنہانْدا باہو جنہاں لا مکانی جاہیں ہو

Eyes red, faces pale, rending sighs from every heart . . .
How far away has that perfumed face gone?
Love and musk cannot remain hidden; they must show themselves.
They are the true mystics, Bahu, whose place is "no place."

"no place": lā makān, meaning a location beyond the confines of linear time and space.

اندر کلمہ کل کل کردا عشق سکھایا کلماں ہو
چوداں طبق کلمے دے اندر قران کتاباں علماں ہو
کانے کپ کے قلم بناون لکھ ناں سکن قلماں ہو
باہو ایہہ کلمہ مینوں پیر پڑھایا ذرا ناں رہیاں الماں ہو

The creed resounds within me, the creed that love taught me.
Fourteen levels has the creed: the Qur'an, books, all sciences.
They shape reeds into pens, but the pens cannot write it!
Bahu, my master taught me this creed, and now no pain remains.

creed: kalma, translated as "creed" throughout this book, refers to the Islamic profession of faith (*al-kalima at-tayyiba*). Uttering the formula "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" constitutes the act of conversion to Islam. This statement is believed to have quasi-magical powers, and the first half of it is one of the most common formulas used in Sufi *zikr.*

ایہ تن رب سچّے دا حجرا دل کھڑیا باغ بہاراں ہو
وچّے کوزے وچّے مصلّے وچّے سجدے دیاں تھاراں ہو
وچّے کعبہ وچّے قبلہ وچّے الاّ اللہّ پکاراں ہو
کامل مرشد ملیا باہو اوہ آپے لیسی ساراں ہو

This body is a dwelling of the true Lord, and my heart like a garden in bloom.

Within it are fountains, within it are prayer grounds, within it places to bow down in prayer.

Within it is the Kaʿba, within it the *qibla,* within it cries of "Only Allah!"

I found the Perfect Guide, Bahu, He alone will take care of me.

qibla: the direction toward the Kaʿba, which Muslims face when they pray. It is normally marked by a niche which is one of the main architectural features in a mosque.

Perfect Guide: God is the Perfect Guide who leads Sufis once they have passed the point beyond which a human guide cannot take them.

آپ ناں طالب ہیں کہیں دے لوکاں نوں طالب کردے ہو
چاون کھیپاں کردے سیپاں اللّہ دے قہر توں ناہیں ڈردے ہو
عشق مجازی تلکن بازی پیر اولّے دھردے ہو
او شرمندے ہوسن باہو اندر روز حشر دے ہو

They study nothing themselves but make students of others.

They demand oaths of loyalty, not fearing the wrath of God.

Symbolic love is a slippery slope, yet they step upon it.

Bahu, will *they* be ashamed on the Day of Reckoning!

symbolic love: symbolic or metaphorical love (*ʿishq-i majāzi*) is the human love of God which is often represented in erotic metaphors. This love, one of the most powerful aspects of Sufi poetry, can also be between two human beings. The most famous instance of this is in the work of Mawlana Jalal ad-din-i Rumi (d. 1273) who dedicated the bulk of his poetry to his friend Shams-i Tabrizi (d. 1248). Symbolic love has very strong homoerotic overtones when applied to love between two human beings, and it is likely that in this poem Bahu is accusing hypocritical Sufi guides and charlatans of engaging in illicit sexual practices.

باہو باغ بہاراں کھڑیاں نرگس ناز شرم دا ہو
دل وچ کعبہ صحی کیتو سے پاکوں پاک پرم دا ہو
طالب طلب طواف تمامی حبّ حضور حرم دا ہو
گیا حجاب تھیوسے حاجی باہو جداں بخشیوس راہ کرم دا ہو

A garden has bloomed, Bahu, shaming the narcissus and the rue.
In my heart I made the Ka'ba out of love.
Seeker, quest, and pilgrimage, all devoted to love of the sacred precinct.
The vein vanished, you became a Haji, Bahu, when you were blessed with God's bounteous path.

Haji: circumambulation of the Ka'ba is a major part of the Hajj pilgrimage, at the conclusion of which the pilgrim is known as a Haji.

بغداد شریف ونج کراہاں سودائے کتوسے ہو
رتی عقل دی کراہاں بھار غماںڈا گھدوسے ہو
بھار بھریرا منزل چوکھیری اوڑک ونج پہتیوسے ہو
ذات صفات صحی کتوسے باہو تاں جمال لدھوسے ہو

On going to Baghdad I struck a deal:
For a gram of intellect I took a load of sorrows.
The load grew heavier and my goal more distant, but finally I reached it.
It was when I understood essence and attribute, Bahu, that I found divine beauty.

essence and attribute: a reference to the distinction between the divine essence (*zāt*) and attributes (***sifāt***), which is a **major** topic of discussion not only in Sufism but also in all **schools** of Islamic **theology**. The most widely held understanding of this relationship is that God's essence is unchanging and rationally incomprehensible and that therefore God makes Himself known to human beings through attributes. These attributes are of two types, "intransitive" ones that simply describe God (e.g., Unique, Eternal) and "transitive" ones that describe God's relationship to Creation (e.g., Nurturing, Merciful, Wrathful). The divine attributes are often paired together in stereotypically male and female pairs to emphasize the fact that God simultaneously encompasses and lies beyond all qualities (e.g., divine beauty [*jamāl*], mentioned in the final verse, is a feminine attribute normally paired with divine majesty [*jalāl*], a masculine attribute). Sufis try to approach God by working to understand His attributes.

بنھ چلایا طرف زمیں دے عرشوں فرش ٹکایا ہو
گھر تیں ملیا دیس نکالا اساں لکھیا جھولی پایا ہو
رہ نی دنیاں ناں کر جھیڑا ساڈا اگے دل گھبرایا ہو
اسیں پردیسی ساڈا وطن دوراڈھا باہو دم دم غم سوایا ہو

I was shackled and marched to the earth—from the heavens
thrown on the ground.
I was exiled from my home, my lap filled with what was fated.
Stop, world! Stop bothering me! My heart is already unsettled.
I am in exile, my home far away, Bahu, and my grief grows with
every breath.

پڑھ پڑھ علم ملوك رجھاون کیا ہویا اس پڑھیاں ہو
ہرگز مکھّن مول ناں آوے پھٹے دُدھ دے کڑیاں ہو
آکھ چنڈورا ہتھ کے آئیو ایس انگوری چنیاں ہو
ہك دل خستہ رکھیں راضی باہو لہیں عبادت ورہیاں ہو

Through study and learning they earn the pleasure of princes—
what comes of such learning?
Butter never rises from boiling sour milk.
Speak, bird! What do you gain by pecking newly sprouted grain?
Nursing one broken heart, Bahu, is equal to the worship of
many years.

پڑھ پڑھ علم ہزار کتاباں عالم ہوئے بھارے ہو
ہك حرف عشق دا پڑھن ناں جانن بھُلے پھرن وچارے ہو
ہك نگاہ جے عاشق ویکھے لکھ ہزاراں تارے ہو
لکھ نگاہ جے عالم ویکھے کسے ناں کدھی چاہڑے ہو
عشق عقل وچ منزل بھاری سئیاں کوہانڈے پاڑے ہو
جنہاں عشق خرید ناں کیتا باہو اوہ دوہیں جہانیں مارے ہو

Having learned wisdom from a thousand books, they become great scholars.

They cannot learn one letter of love—the wretches wander in ignorance.

If a lover glances just once, he can swim a hundred million rivers.

If the scholar looks a hundred million times, he cannot reach the other bank.

Between learning and love is an arduous journey, with many miles of distance.

Whoever does not gain love, Bahu, is a loser in both worlds.

توڑے تنگ پرانے ہوون گجھے ناں رہنڈے تازی ہو
مار نقارہ دَل وچ وڑیا کھیدَ گیا ہك بازی ہو
مار دلاں نوں جول دتونیں جدوں تکے نین نیازی ہو
انہاں نال کیہ ہویا باہو جنہاں یار ناں رکھیا راضی ہو

Arabian stallions cannot be hidden beneath threadbare saddles.

He entered the field striking the drum and played one round.

Strike their hearts and shake them up when they see Your beloved eyes.

Bahu, what became of those who did not satisfy their Beloved?

توں تاں جاگ ناں جاگ فقیرا انت نوں لوڑ جگایا ہو
اکھیں میٹیاں ناں دل جاگے ، جاگے جاں مطلب پایا ہو
ایہ نقطہ جداں کیتا پختہ تاں ظاہر آکھ سنایا ہو
میں تاں بھلی وینْدی ساں باہو مینوں مرشد راہ دکھایا ہو

Wake up or don't, mystic, you'll be awakened by need in the end.

The heart doesn't awaken by closing one's eyes, but only when one finds the meaning.

When I truly grasped this point, then did I declare it openly:

I was going along mindlessly, Bahu, then the guide showed me the way.

تسبیح پھری تے دل نہیں پھریا کی لیناں تسبیح پھڑ کے ہو
علم پڑھیا تے ادب ناں سکھیا کی لیناں علم نوں پڑھ کے ہو
چلّے کٹّے تے کجھ ناں کھٹیا کی لیناں چلیاں وڑ کے ہو
جاگ بناں دُدھ جمدے ناہیں باہو بھانْویں لال ہونْوں کڑھ کڑھ کے ہو

The rosary spun but the heart did not spin, what's the point of holding a rosary?

You learned all the sciences but you didn't learn manners; what's the point of learning sciences?

You sat for long vigils but experienced nothing, what's the point of doing vigils?

Yogurt doesn't set without starter, Bahu, even if you boil milk until it browns.

rosary: prayer beads (*tasbīh*) are widely used by Muslims in general and Sufis in particular as an aid to meditation. The most common formulas recited using these beads are "Praise be to God" (*al-hamdu li'llāh*), "God is Great" (*Allāhu akbar*), and "Glory be to God" (*subhān Allāh*). The beads take their Arabic name from the last of these, *tasbīh* being a verbal noun meaning glorification. The formulas are normally recited ninety-nine times or in multiples thereof. For this reason, Islamic rosaries normally have thirty-three or ninety-nine beads.

ثابت عشق تنہاں نیں لدھا جنہاں ترٹی چوڑچا کیتی ہو
ناں اوہ صوفی ناں اوہ صافی ناں سجدہ کرن مسیتی ہو
خالص نیل پرانے اُتّے نہیں چڑھدا رنگ مجیٹھی ہو
قاضی آن شرع ول باہو کدیں عشق نماز ناں نیتی ہو

Those who destroy their own treasures are the ones who find
true love.
They are not Sufis or ascetics, nor do they bow down inside
the mosque.
Green dye cannot cover pure, old, indigo blue.
Let the judges come to the true law, Bahu, those who have never
vowed the prayer of love.

جیں دل عشق خرید ناں کیتا سو دل درد ناں پھٹّی ہو
اس دل تھیں سنگ پتھّر چنگے جو دل غفلت آٹّی ہو
جیں دل عشق حضور ناں منگیا سو درگاہوں سٹّی ہو
ملیا دوست ناں انہاں باہو جنہاں چوڑ ناں کیتی ترٹّی ہو

Pain does not blossom in a heart that has no love.
Rocks and stones are better than a heart mired in ignorance.
A heart that does not ask for love is thrown from the
divine presence.
Those who do not lose their treasures, Bahu, do not find
the Friend.

جنگل دے وچ شیر مریلا باز پوے وچ گھر دے ہو
عشق جیہا صرّاف ناں کوئی کجھ ناں چھوڑے وچ زر دے ہو
عاشقاں نیندر بھک ناں کائی عاشق مول ناں مردے ہو
عاشق جیندے تڈاں ڈٹھوسے باہو جداں صاحب اگے سر دھردے ہو

The tiger kills in the jungle, but the falcon even strikes at home.
There is no smith like love, which leaves nothing mixed in the gold.
Lovers feel neither sleep nor hunger; lovers never die.
We see lovers truly alive, Bahu, when they offer their heads to the Master.

جے رب ناتیاں دھوتیاں ملدا تاں ملدا ڈڈواں مچھیاں ہو
جے رب لمیاں والاں ملدا تاں ملدا بھیڈاں سسّیاں ہو
جے رب راتیں جاگیاں ملدا تاں ملدا کال کڑچھیاں ہو
جے رب جتیاں ستیاں ملدا تاں ملدا ڈانداں خصیاں ہو
رب انہاں نوں ملدا باہو نیّتاں جنہاں دیاں اچھیاں ہو

If the Lord were found by bathing and washing, He would be found by frogs and fish.
If the Lord were found by having long hair, He would be found by sheep and goats.
If the Lord were found by staying awake all night, He would be found by the cuckoo.
If the Lord were found by being celibate, He would be found by gelded oxen.
The Lord is only found by those, Bahu, whose intentions are good.

جنہاں شوہ الف تھیں پایا پھول قرآن ناں پڑھدے ہو
اوہ مارن دم محبّت والا دُور ہویونیں پردے ہو
دوزخ بہشت غلام تنہانْدے چا کیتونے بردے ہو
میں قرباں تنہاں دے باہو جہڑے وحدت دے وچ وڑدے ہو

Those who find the Beloved in the letter *alif* need not open the Qur'an to read it.
When they blow with the breath of love, the curtains are pushed aside.
Heaven and hell are their slaves, made to serve them.
I give my life for those, Bahu, who enter the state of unity.

alif: the first letter of the Arabic alphabet; it is also the first letter of the word "Allah." The letter is a vertical line, identical to the number "one," and is often seen as a symbol of God's unity. In popular Sufism, it is widely believed that truly understanding this letter is equal to the knowledge gained from reading all the books in the world.

جے کر دین علم وچ ہونْدا تاں سر نیزے کیوں چڑھدے ہو
اٹھاراں ہزار جو عالم آیا اوہ اگّے حسین دے مردے ہو
جے کچھ ملاحظہ سرور دا کردے تاں خیمے تمبو کیوں سڑدے ہو
جے کر مندے بیعت رسولی تاں پانی کیوں بند کردے ہو
پر صادق دین تنہاں دے باہو جو سر قربانی کردے ہو

If religion lay in learning, why would they stick their heads on lances?
If eighteen thousand sages were there, surely they would have died before Husayn!
If they had truly copied the Prophet, then why did the tents burn?
If they had accepted the Messenger's successor, why did they cut off the water?
But true religion is theirs, Bahu, who sacrifice their own heads.

This poem alludes to the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Husayn, who, along with his family, was massacred by troops loyal to the counter-Caliph, Yazid ibn Muʿawiya, at Karbala in 680 C.E. According to legend, there were eighteen thousand Muslim sages in the world at that time, none of whom came to Husayn's aid. Husayn and his family were besieged at Karbala where the enemy cut off their water supply to force them to surrender. The siege ended with the massacre of the majority of males, including Husayn.

چڑھ چنّاں تے کر رشنائی تارے ذکر کرینـدے تیرا ہو
تیرے جہے چن کئی سے چڑھدے سانوں سجناں باجھ ہنیرا ہو
جتھے چن اساڈا چڑھدا اُتھے قدر نہیں کجھ تیرا ہو
جس دے کارن اساں جنم گوایا باہو یار ملے ہك پھیرا ہو

Arise and shine bright, moon! The stars are engaged in your recollection.

Many moons like you have risen, but without my Beloved all is darkness.

Where my Moon rises, there you have no worth.

The Beloved for whom I lost a lifetime, may I meet Him just once, Bahu.

حافظ پڑھ پڑھ کرن تکبّر مُلّاں کرن وڈیائی ہو
ساون ماہ دے بدلاں وانگوں پھرن کتاباں چائی ہو
جتھے ویکھیں چنگا چوکھا پڑھن کلام سوائی ہو
دوہیں جہانیں مُٹھے باہو جنہاں کھادی ویچ کمائی ہو

Qur'an scholars read and aggrandize themselves, priests act sanctimonious.

Like rain clouds in the monsoon, they wander heavy with books.

They recite more wherever they see greater gain and plenty.

Bahu, those who sell and eat up their earnings lose both worlds.

خام کیہ جانن سار فقر دی جہڑے محرم ناہیں دل دے ہو
آب مٹی تھیں پیدا ہوئے خامی بھانڈے گل دے ہو
لعل جواہراں دا قدر کی جانن جو سوداگر بل دے ہو
ایمان سلامت سوئی ویسن باہو جہڑے بھج فقیراں ملدے ہو

What do the unfit know, those who do not share the heart's secrets?
They are as unbaked clay pots, made from mud and water.
What do merchants of glass know about diamonds and rubies?
Only they shall leave this world with perfect faith, Bahu, who run to meet *faqirs*.

faqir: literally, "beggar," a common term for a Sufi mystic, suggesting a direct relationship between spiritual wealth and material poverty.

دل دریا سمندروں ڈونگھے کون دلاں دیاں جانے ہو
وچّے بیڑے وچّے جھیڑے وچّے ونجھ مُہانے ہو
چوداں طبق دلے دے اندر جتھے عشق تنبو ونج تانے ہو
جو دل دا محرم ہووے باہو سوئی رب پچھانے ہو

The heart is deeper than rivers and oceans, who knows what lies in the heart?
Within it are boats, within it oars, within it boat-poles and boatmen.
Fourteen levels has the heart, where love has pitched its tent.
Those who are the heart's confidants, Bahu, only they recognize the Lord.

Fourteen levels has the heart: see p. 38.

دل کالے کنوں منہْ کالا چنگا جے کوئی اس نوں جانے ہو
منہْ کالا دل اچھا ہووے تاں دل یار پچھانے ہو
ایہہ دل یار دے پچھے ہووے متاں یار وی کدی پچھانے ہو
سَے عالم چھوڑ مسیتاں نٹّھے باہو جد لگے نیں دل ٹکانے ہو

A blackened face is better than a blackened heart, if someone were to understand this.

Blackened face, good heart—that is how the heart knows the Beloved.

If such a heart pursues the Beloved, then maybe the Beloved would know it as well.

Scores of scholars fled the mosque, Bahu, when their hearts were set aright.

درد اندر دا اندر ساڑے باہر کراں تاں گھائل ہو
حال اساڈا کیویں اوہ جانن جو دنیا تے مائل ہو
بحر سمندر عشقے والا ہر دم رہندا حائل ہو
پہنچ حضور آسان ناں باہو اساں نام ترے دے سائل ہو

My inner pain burns me inside, and if I bring it out it wounds me.

How can those inclined to this world know the state I'm in?

The ocean of love is always an obstacle:

Reaching the divine presence is not easy, Bahu, so we are asking Your name.

Your name: God is considered to have many names in Islam, the greatest of which is a mystery. It is believed that anyone who knows this name understands the nature of God.

دردمنداں دے دھوئیں دھُکھدے دَردا کوئی ناں سیکے ہو
انہاں دھوئیاں دے تا تکھیرے محرم ہووے تاں سیکے ہو
چھک شمشیر کھڑاہے سر تے ترس پَوَس تاں تھیکے ہو
ساہورے کُڑیئے اپنے ونجناں باہو سدا ناں رہناں پیکے ہو

Smoke rises from the painstricken, but no one warms themselves out of fear.

The heat of this smoke is intense, one could warm oneself if one knew the secret.

Sword drawn, He stands over my head; He might sheath it if He feels pity.

Girl, you have to go to your in-laws; you cannot stay with your parents forever, Bahu.

دردمنداں دا خون جو پیندا برہوں باز مریلا ہو
چھاتی دے وچ کیتُس ڈیرا جیویں شیر بیٹھا مل بیلا ہو
ہاتھی مست سندوری وانگوں کردا پیلا پیلا ہو
اس پیلے دا وسواس ناں کیجے باہو پیلے باجھ ناں ہوندا میلا ہو

The love which drinks the blood of the painstricken is a deadly falcon.

It has created a lair in the breast, like the tiger takes over the forest.

Like an elephant drunk on vermilion, it charges and charges.

Do not fear this charge, Bahu, for without the charge there is no meeting.